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Sovietization of Czechoslovak Army

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1. The promotion of Cepicka to the rank of army general and assigning him the post of Minister of National Defense created an unfavorable reaction among the officers. Cepicka is not a career soldier; he does not have the least understanding of military problems. It was clear that his promotion was purely political and that his appointment would mean a complete new series of political purges in the army and ultimately complete subjugation of the army to the Communist Party. These fears were fully justified; as soon as Cepicka took over, new severe purges began, affecting the Quartermaster Corps in particular because Cepicka wanted to win the confidence of the enlisted man by bettering his food. The Sovietization of the Czech Army was quickly completed.
2. The pre-World War II Czechoslovak military doctrine was entirely discarded and a Soviet doctrine introduced by the new issue of field tactical manuals in 1951.

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manuels issued after 1945 were either translations of Soviet manuals or based on the Soviet doctrine. The following illustrates the difference in tactics between the old Czechoslovak Army and the Sovietized one.

(a) Offensive warfare

- (2) The former approach march and approach, which began as soon as the marching formations reached the area controlled by enemy field artillery (about eight km), were replaced by the attacking march which ends in meeting engagement. Covering elements during the march, frontal, flank, and rear guards, were replaced by frontal, flank, and rear shielding detachments, according to terminology.

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The composition of these detachments was changed as well; according to the former tactical principles, an infantry regiment was covered by an advance unit of battalion strength. This battalion sent forward as its cover one company, the company one squad, the squad its riflemen, and these were covered by individual scouts. According to the Soviet manual, a battalion is covered by a platoon, strengthened by a detachment of heavy weapons. This platoon is covered by one squad, and the squad by a pair of scouts.

- (2) According to former tactics, the infantry, after jumping off from the line of departure, advanced into the line of assault by rushes and without halting for any length of time. This advance was supported by HMGs, apart from artillery. HMGs were located in a so-called fire base (which was immediately behind the line of departure), and they advanced after the supported unit had reached its first objective. At present, the infantry advances from the line of departure into the line of assault by degrees from one phase-line to another. The phase-lines are pre-determined according to terrain features at distances of approximately 150-200 m. At these phase-lines the infantry halts for four or five minutes, digs in and opens fire with all available weapons. The supporting HMGs are incorporated in the attacking formation and fire from their respective phase-lines.
- (b) Defensive warfare
- (1) As far as static defense is concerned, special emphasis is placed on the tenacity of men with high morale to hold the positions. In order to achieve this, extensive political indoctrination is used to inoculate each man with the realization of his individual responsibility for defense. The hatred of the enemy is one of the means used to attain this aim.
 - (2) The deployment in a static position remained unchanged in principle. The terminology was adjusted to that used by the Soviets. A more substantial change took place in assigning defensive tasks to units of battalions or lower levels. Instead of the former frontal defense sectors, these units are now assigned areas (rayons) of defense, each consisting of three basic terrain points. The individual commanders are personally responsible for holding these basic points even if encircled.
 - (3) A further change has taken place in the cover of the main line of resistance (defense). Instead of the former advance guards which consisted of a scout echelon and a combat echelon, at present so-called combat cover is sent forward as cover. Thus a battalion would send forward one platoon about one to one and one half km in front of the main line of defense. The squads of this platoon would be deployed in a line and each of them would defend an area of resistance which would result in their mutual protection. Each squad would cover itself with a pair of guards.
 - (4) So-called antitank company areas or antitank battalion knots are organized in the direction of likely enemy tank attacks. A company antitank area consists of one rifle company, three to five AT guns, one to two light antitank weapons (bazookas or AT rocket launchers), HMGs, and mortars. The battalion AT knot comprises 12 to 15 AT guns.

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3. The Communist propaganda tries to create the impression that the Czechoslovak Army is a tool of the working class for the safeguarding of the social progress achieved by the February putsch. This progress must be safeguarded against internal enemies and the aggressive Western Powers. The greatest emphasis is placed on the propaganda that the main task of the Czechoslovak Army is to safeguard peace in close cooperation with the Soviet Army. A series of facts contradicts this camouflage of the peaceful mission of the Czech Army, and, in fact, proves the exact opposite. If the Communist government of Czechoslovakia really considered only defense, it would concentrate on defense measures along the Western frontiers and place more emphasis on defensive warfare in army schools and courses and in the actual training of troops. In reality, however, a process is under way of quickly reorganizing an army made up primarily of prevailing rifle divisions into an army of mechanized and motorized units. Every effort is being exerted toward achieving a higher degree of battle preparedness for offensive action. The following facts illustrate this:

- (a) Since early 1951, all officers have been trained in the operation of motor vehicles.
- (b) All students in officers' training schools are taught to operate motor vehicles.
- (c) In August 1951, there was a sudden transfer of 150 young infantry lieutenants to the tank corps.
- (d) The automobile plant Tatra in Koprivnice /4936N-1809E/ was changed from a civilian administration to a military one at the beginning of 1951; there was a complete switch in production to army trucks.
- (e) There was an intensification of training in motorized and mechanized warfare in the Infantry Officers' Training School in 1951-52.
- (f) The tactical problems dealing with offensive warfare make up three-fourths of the problems dealt with at the officers' school.
- (g) Offensive action was the subject of four out of five of the tactical problems during the military refresher schooling of the instructors and staff officers of the Infantry officers' School in the 1950-51 school year.

(h)

all the Infantry Divisions were to be motorized and each division and infantry regiment was to have a tank unit as an organic component.

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